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NOTES ON CALIFORNIA FOLK-LORE.¹

A YOKUTS CREATION MYTH.

THE following tradition was obtained in 1903 from Jim Herrington, an Indian, then ill and now dead, of the Wükchamni or Wiksumne tribe of the Yokuts. This tribe lived on the Kaweah River, in the vicinity of the present town of Lemon Cove.

Long ago the whole world was rock and there was neither fire nor light. The coyote (kaiyu) sent his brother, the wolf (ewayet, iweyit), into the mountains, telling him: "Go upward until you come to a large lake, where you will see fire. Then take some of it." The wolf did as ordered by Coyote, and after some fighting obtained part of the fire. From this he made the moon and then the sun, and put them in the sky. Then it was light, and has been so ever since.

The eagle (tsohit, djokhid) kept Coyote at work, and the latter made the panther (wuhushet, wöhöshit) and the wolf help him. Coyote made the springs and streams. He worked very hard to do this. Then he and the eagle made people. They also made deer and elk and antelope and all game animals, and put fish into the water. They gave these animals to the people, who went everywhere and killed the game for their subsistence.

Then Coyote, the wolf, and the panther said: "In time there will be too many people and they will kill us." Now Coyote was sorry that he had helped the eagle make the people. The panther said: "They will kill us if we do not go away." "Then go up," the eagle told him. The panther answered: "I have no feathers, I cannot fly. I cannot go up." "Then go to the mountains," said the eagle. To the wolf he said: "Go to the hills;" and to Coyote: "Go to the plains." The three went where they were told, and have lived there ever since.

George W. Stewart.

VISALIA.

EARTHQUAKES.

All the Indians of California have a name for the earthquake, and most of them personify it. The belief that earthquakes are caused by the movements of a giant who supports the earth, an idea that crops out in many parts of the world, does not seem to be prevalent among them. Earthquake is a man of supernatural power, usually either allied or contrasted to Thunder. Sometimes there are several earthquake brothers. In northwestern California, among the Yurok, Earthquake shakes the earth by his running, just as Thunder,

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also imagined to be a man, produces thunder and lightning by running in the sky and opening and shutting his eyes. Earthquake is said by these Indians to have originally lived at the village of Kenek, on the south side of Klamath River, some thirty-five miles from its mouth. He was a most successful shinny player, defeating all comers by causing the ground to rise in waves under their feet, so that they stumbled and fell as they ran. He was finally defeated by a visitor who observed that wherever Earthquake himself ran the ground was level and undisturbed, and who, therefore, kept close to him until he succeeded in winning the game. At the present time earthquakes are caused by the tilting of the world. This tilting is produced when the deerskin and jumping dances are not held. When two earthquakes occur in the same year it is a very bad sign, for then the world is far off its level. If the earth should tilt far enough it would slide off altogether. The earthquakes are therefore a warning, which has in the past always been obeyed.

One tradition represents Earthquake as a man travelling northward along the coast to the end of the world. He is followed by Thunder, who wishes to be accepted as his companion. Earthquake at first is doubtful as to Thunder's power, but after the latter has given several exhibitions of rumbling and shaking that almost equal those of Earthquake himself, the two continue the journey together.

A somewhat similar relation between the two powers is found in a Yokuts myth from Tule River, in the south central part of the State. Earthquake and Thunder contend for superiority. Each hides the children of the other, but both find their own and liberate them with a display of power.

A. L. Kroeber.

SAN FRANCISCO.

WATER MONSTERS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA.

The Indians of Trinity River, belonging to the Wintun and Chimariko stock, have a belief in a mythical animal known as a "water panther." The animal is said to be two or three times as large as an ordinary panther, and has enormous eyes. These animals are supposed to occur in several places, but never are seen except at times of flood. At the present day they do not attack people, but formerly were said to have done so.

On the Klamath River the Shasta Indians have a related belief in a "water-dog." These live in dangerous whirlpools in the river, and appear like huge spotted dogs. They cause the death of persons by drowning. The bodies of those drowned thus are, it is thought, always found covered with spots similar to those of the "water-dog" itself.

Roland B. Dixon.

INDIAN OPINIONS OF THE EARTHQUAKE OF APRIL, 1906.

It is the custom of the few Indians of Wintun stock, who now live in Cortina valley, in the western foothills of the Sacramento valley at a point about eighty-five miles nearly due north of San Francisco, to hold each spring a ceremony called Hesi. During an attendance at this ceremony in May, 1906, the following theories concerning the recent great earthquake which affected San Francisco and other parts of the Coast Range region in California were gained from a speech made by the shaman who conducted the ceremony and from discussion by the other Indians assembled.

The world was originally much smaller than at present. As the Indian population in times past increased, the earth was rent and stretched by Coyote Old Man, the southern Wintun culture-hero, in order to make room for the newcomers. In the beginning the surface of the earth was a plain, but with the rendings, of which there have already been four, the present mountains, valleys, and other physiological features were formed. There is to be another great rending of the earth, in which the mountains are to be razed and the whole surface of the earth is to be made level, like the Wintun abode of the dead. Quite naturally, the great earthquake which had occurred less than a month previously was connected in the Indian mind with this expected catastrophe, particularly by virtue of the fact that at the time of the ceremony referred to there were small earth tremors felt almost every day, and also owing to the fact that at that particular time there was on Cache Creek, at a point not more than fifteen miles distant, a great landslide which dammed the stream for several days, finally breaking with the weight of accumulated water and doing considerable damage at Rumsey, the nearest town down stream.

There were, however, differences of opinion concerning these seismic disturbances. One of the shamans held that, as the Indians are so nearly extinct, these disturbances were the forerunners of the great levelling which is to transform the world. On the other hand, the old shaman above referred to, who conducted the ceremony on this occasion, held that the Indians are not entirely gone and that the disturbances were the forerunners of another stretching of the earth, this time in order to make room for the ever-increasing white population. He was of the opinion, however, that immediately all the Indians are dead, which will be very soon, according to him, this great catastrophe will totally destroy all things on the earth and render it like the Wintun abode of the dead.

This same difference in opinion was found to exist among many of the Indians assembled at this ceremony, some expressing the belief

that the great levelling or end of the world was at hand, others accepting the explanation given by the old shaman that this was merely another stretching of the earth to make more room. But all seemed to be confident that ultimately there would be a great upheaval and levelling which would obliterate all things at present upon the earth.

S. A. Barrett.

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